the story of Ñwali, for instance, it is said that, when he lived, 773
stones were not yet hard, and so the implements of the first men left their impression on the rocks (Comp. I. p. 22). But they are in the first place the *creators of mankind*, as we shall notice.

I believe that the *origin of man* preoccupies the Bantu mind much more than the origin of the world as a whole. They can live their whole life without being troubled by this question, which has perplexed so many hearts in other lands. Only a few particularly serious spirits, the religious geniuses of the tribe, search eagerly for light on this subject. I have met with one of these. His name was Rangane, and he came from the Maluleke district. When quite a young boy he often asked his mother who it was who had made heaven and earth. She told him : "It is Khudjwana, but he died long ago. Even the place where he was buried is unknown." This did not satisfy the curiosity of the child : so she sent him to the old men to question them. They answered by the myth of the reed which we shall explain later on, saying : "All men came from a reed." This also failed to satisfy the thirst of this inquiring soul, desirous of knowing whence everything proceeds, and he told me how gladly surprised he was when, having come to Pretoria for work, he heard a convert say that God had created everything and teaching the Christian explanation of the world. I remember that his face beamed with joy when he told his story. But such earnest, philosophical natures are very rare amongst Natives, and Rangane was an exception. He died when still at the beginning of his course of study ; and he was vastly superior to most of his comrades as regards religious perception.

## II. *The celestial world.*

### (Thonga astronomy).

If Thongas do not bother much about the origin of heaven, and 772
of its lights, what are their ideas concerning them?

*Heaven* (tilo, dji-ma) is for them an immense solid vault which rests on the earth. The point where heaven touches the earth

772 is called *bugimamusi*, a curious word of the bu-ma class, the prefix *bu* meaning a place, viz., the place where the women can lean their pestles against the vault, (whilst everywhere else pestles must be leant against a wall or a tree). This expression is sometimes further explained by the following words : "Lomu ba kandjaka na ba khisamile" — "Where women pound their mealies on their knees ;" they cannot stand erect, or their pestles would strike against the vault! This vault rests on the earth, which is often called *libala*, viz., the great plain. On what does the earth itself rest? This question does not seem to trouble the Thonga mind and I never heard an answer to it. In this respect it may be said, in excuse for the African Natives, that the ancient Greeks, with all their intellectual ability, were not much in advance of them. Some people escape the difficulty by asserting that the earth is infinite, viz., that it is endlessly prolonged downwards and has no bottom. — In the next chapter we shall see that *Tilo*, heaven, is, for the Thongas, not only the material firmament which rests on the earth, but a spiritual principle which plays a considerable part in the religious conceptions of the tribe.

772 The *sun* (dambu, dji-ma) is never personified, nor worshipped.
821 This word is perhaps related to Nyambe of the Ba-Rotse, Nzambi of the Vili, and a number of other similar words which are names of God. But if there was ever a time when the sun was regarded as a personal being, the notion has now entirely faded away. On the seashore, in the Makaneta district, according to Mboza, people believe that the sun emerges from the water. The reflection of light which remains on the sea, after the appearance of the sun, is considered as a kind of source of light from which the sun emerges and renews itself every morning : it is "cut out from the provision of fire," adheres to heaven, follows its course and *dies* in the West. To-morrow another sun will come out from the "provision," and so on. But others object to this explanation and assert that the sun passes under the earth and comes back the following day : so there is only one sun. To this theory the first retort that the earth having no bottom, the sun cannot pass under it !

000 The dawn is called *mpundju* ; then comes *tlhabela sana*, the

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821 which is also met with in *nyeleti* (star) and in the names of certain rivers. (I. p. 36.) At the present time there is no trace of worship or of mythological conceptions in connection with it. Natives see in its spots a woman carrying a shirundju basket or a bundle of sticks, but they do not attach to that image more importance than we do when we talk of the man in the moon.

821 527 241 I have described (I. p. 52) how the new moon is received with exclamations of joy : in the villages the first person who sees it shouts : "Kengelekezeeee,"—"the Crescent! the Crescent!" and this word is passed on from one village to another, and dancers rejoice because they will have moonlight to illuminate their feasts! Such is, at least, the reason now given by the Rongas for this custom. There were perhaps other ideas connected with the new moon in former times. — According to a Nkuna informant the day of the new moon is a *shimusi*, a day of rest. It is taboo to till the fields and cut the roots of the trees with a hoe. The moon must be left to become firm (tiyela). It is still tender as a new born child. Destroying winds might

821 787 828 blow and hail fall if this taboo were transgressed. — The appearance of the crescent was also carefully examined, says the same informant. If its horns were turned towards the earth, this showed that there was nothing to fear, all the dangers contained in this month had been poured out : "mafumo ma hangalakile" — "the assagais were dispersed." On the contrary, if the horns were turned towards heaven, this showed that the moon was full of weapons and misfortunes. — The new moon is of great importance in the customs connected with exorcism and possession, as every exorcist must undergo the *haza* purification at each new moon (Chapter III). Moreover Thongas, like many civilised people, also believe that some persons at this time have an attack of madness which is called *rihuhe ra ñhweti*, the lunar madness.

772 821 When the first quarter appears, the moon is said to *thwaza*, a Zulu word which corresponds to *tjhama* in Thonga, and is very much used in the terminology of possession. Eight days later, it is said to *basa*, to be white or brilliant ; full moon is said to *sima* or to *lata batjonguana*, to put the little children to bed, because when it rises, it finds them already sleeping on their mats.

The wane is called *ku shwela dambo* : the moon is then found by the rising sun to be still in the sky, not having yet dipped below the horizon. When, at last, it disappears, it is *munyama*, the obscurity; the moon is said *to fa*, to have died. Is this meant figuratively, as is often the case with the word ku fa, or do the Thongas really think that each moon dies and is replaced by a new moon? It is difficult to say ; most of them believe in an actual destruction and a new creation of the moon each month (Timotheo), and this would explain why they have the same word for moon and month ; they evidently identify the two ideas. Some, however, told me that they believed it to be the same celestial body which appeared anew each month. 772 821

Spoon, who is endowed with a very vivid imagination, believed that the sun and the moon have a race each month : the moon when it first appears is not yet firm (a yi si tiyela), like a new born child, so its light is feeble ; it is dominated by the sun ; but it grows and fights. When it is full, the sun sees "that now it is the moon!" : it is something to be reckoned with! During the second half of the month, as it decreases, it lingers in the sky and the sun soon overtakes it again and compels it to pass behind. Then the moon is entirely vanquished! How far these were Spoon's personal explanations or generally accepted ideas, I could not say. The term *shwela*, applied to the last quarter and meaning : "to be surprised in the morning" (See Ch. III), seems to convey a similar idea, and it is probable that Spoon rightly interpreted the ancient ideas of the tribe.

Each moon, being new, bears a special name. These names of the months, or moons, are now almost completely forgotten, at least in the Southern clans. This is indeed curious, when we think of the custom of presenting little children to the moon and telling them the name of their month (I. p. 53). This rite ought to have prevented the names from becoming obsolete. In the Northern clans they have been better preserved, and one of my colleagues, the Rev. H. Berthoud, succeeded in identifying them more or less. His attempt to revive the nomenclature for use among civilised Natives did not, however, succeed any better than the attempt of the scientists of the French Revolution. 772 805 821

192 Amongst the Ba-Ronga those[1] which are still known are : *Nhlangula*,
805 the month in which the flowers are swept (hlangula) from the
821 trees, probably October, when all the minkuhlu, minkanye, etc., blossom ; *Ñwendjamhala*, the month in which the antelope mhala, brings forth its young (November?) ; *Mawuwana*, when the *tihuhlu* (p. 18) are plucked, because the people shout : "Wuwana! wuwana!" in their joy at having plenty of almonds to suck, corresponds to December. *Hukuri* is said to be the month when the fruits of the *nkwakwa* (p. 17) are ripe (December also?). *Ndjati*, or *ndjata*, viz., I am coming, is the time of *nwebo*, when everyone is in his fields eating the new cobs of mealies, and if you call a person he will answer : "I will come directly! Have patience! I am busy here!" "This may be January or February. *Sunguti* is also one of the summer months. *Sibamesoko*, the moon which closes the paths, also called *Dwebindlela* or *Sibandlela*, is easy to identify : it is February, the time when the grass grows so high that it hides the paths leading to the nkanye trees. This is the end of the bukanye time (I. p. 397). *Nyenyana*, *Nywenywankulu* are the months of the birds (nyanyana), when one spends all one's time in chasing the winged marauders from the fields of sorghum and millet (March. April). *Mudashini*, viz., what am I to eat? is the month when you have harvested so many different kinds of food that you do not know which to choose : this is the time directly after harvest, May or June. *Khotabushika*, viz., when winter comes, probably June or July.

●772 The *stars* are called *tinyeleti* (yin-tin) and play a remarkably
821 small part in the ideas of the tribe. The modern theory according to which all religions started from the worship of stars, finds no confirmation at all in the South African Bantu tribes.

821 It is taboo to try to count the stars. If any one attempts
784 to do so people will say to him : "Keep quiet or you will wet the
861 hut during the night!" Counting stars represents the torments of the soul! If a child has been deprived of food as a punishment for an offence, his parents will tell him, when he goes to sleep : "Go and count the stars," viz., "you will feel hungry and not be able to go to sleep ; you will be as unhappy as if you had to count the stars."

[1] [names of moons -- Analyst]

I never heard a distinction made between fixed stars and planets. They are all called tinyeleti. The best-known is Venus, which bears many names. Not knowing that the evening and morning star are one and the same, they have given it different names. The evening star is *Gumbashilalelo*, the one which steals the evening meal, because it appears when people are eating it, or *khwekhweti*, the brilliant star, or *Nkata wa hweti*, the moon's husband (as the two are often seen close together) ; the morning star is called *Ngongomela*, or *Khwezu*, and is greatly lauded as the herald of day. It gives the warriors the signal for starting on a war-like expedition : the warriors can easily kill their enemies under cover of the darkness, and the sun will soon appear and help them to complete their victory. Travellers also start on their journey when they see it : the dawn will soon be here ! Lit by its light, candidates for circumcision leave the village of the chief to go to the house of initiation. According to one of my informants (I. p. 75) there is a profound and mystic idea in this custom : Ngongomela announces the day ; so little boys must be conducted by the morning star when they abandon their childhood and all its ignorance to enter the adult life with all its knowledge. It leads them from darkness into the light ! So Venus plays a great part in Thonga customs. It is the great star. Notice the feminine suffix *eti* in one of its names. It may have been personified in former times. 821 772 881

The *Pleiades* are the only constellation which bears a name in Thonga. They call it *shirimelo*, the one which announces the tilling season, because, in fact, in the lands situated in the Tropic of Cancer, it rises in July or August, when tilling is resumed. I have not heard of any other constellation known to the Natives. They have no notion whatever of constellations : their mind does not seem to have tried to group the stars, or to have seen figures of animals, or objects, in the sky ; their imagination in this domain is very poor, and they remain far behind the Oriental nations in this respect. 821 772

*Falling stars* are looked on as a bad omen. When they see one falling towards a certain point of the horizon, Natives think that a Chief must have died in the country towards which the 821 787 789

821 star is directing its course, and they have a formula of incantation
787 to get rid of the misfortune attending this phenomenon. They
789 say : "Thu! Thu! Nkulunkulu ndjuwee, famba psa ku u nga fa u ku bi." — "You great thing, go away alone (without me, leaving me behind) and die and disappear entirely." This is more an imprecation (shiruketelo) than an incantation. The syllable *thu* indicates, and accompanies, the emission of a little saliva. It is different from the sacramental *tsu*, employed to invoke the spirits of the ancestors : it is an insult. It is spitting *at* something, not an act of respect and an offering, like *tsu* (1). This is the Ronga formula ; the one used in Northern clans has the same meaning : "*Rura, rura weshe*" (Move, move alone!).

821 *Comets* greatly impress the imagination of the Thongas ;
787 they are called *shimusana*, or *nyeleti ya musana*, the star of dust, or *nyeleti ya nkila*, the star with a tail, and when they appear they also mean the death of a chief. People say : "See ! A chief has died, but they have not yet published the mourning" (I. p. 414). The star which is said to have appeared the year of the death of Manukosi was probably a comet. (See Report of the S.A.A.A.S. 1905, Vol. III, p. 232.)

772 These few superstitions and observations comprise all the Astronomy of the Thongas. The sidereal world is almost entirely outside the range of their preoccupations.

## III. *Cosmographic and Meteorological Phenonomena.*

### 1) The Wind.

821 The wind is called *moya*, an interesting word which means
822 also spirit (the human breath and the spiritual part of man), and is applied to the acting, living agent, or to the smell, or taste, of some objects. For instance it is said of an alcoholic beverage

861 (1) They spit at a child who is causing an unpleasant smell, saying to him : "Thu! u ya tinyela matjimba." — "Go away to ease yourself." Should you do this to a
578 person older than yourself, he will say to you : "What ! you make *thu* to me (wa ndji tjhuka), you want me to ease myself !"

What is the connection between abnormal births of human beings and the rain-fall? I think it can be found in the conception of Heaven which has inspired so many curious rites, and which I shall explain in the next chapter. So it is possible that, after all, the mbelele rite has a religious idea at its base.

b) *Rain charms.*

The removal of the corpses of abnormal children from dry ground and their burial near the river probably sometimes proves ineffective to produce rain. So Bantu magicians have invented a great many charms to obtain the greatly desired showers, and the power of the rain-makers is enormous. Our tribe does not seem to have developed this art as much as others. The Sutho-Pedis are masters in this domain and Mankhelu, who had been taught by them and had become a great and renowned rain-maker, revealed all his secrets to me. He possessed the drug and used it frequently, he said, having often been called in by Sutho chiefs dwelling in far distant districts, as far off as Pretoria. He assured me that he had met with so much success that these chiefs had given him oxen, horses, a waggon, precious beads, etc.! Where had he found this marvellous drug? At Rivimbi (in Venda ; Luvimbi), a country north of Spelonken, not far from the Limpopo and to which he went, as far as I could make out, in 1865 or 1866. The Luvimbi people are the descendants of Luvimbi, (1) a chief of the old times (as old as Nkuna, says Mankhelu) who, after his death, went to heaven and became king of heaven ; he still exists there as a spirit, hearing and knowing everything that is done on earth. This Luvimbi is probably the same whom the Vendas call the first man, and concerning whom they have a number of traditions which I shall mention a little later.

and those of still-born children or those who died at birth ; to these they add their old rags (perhaps the cloths used for their menses?) ; they bring all these impurities to the cross-ways and *burn them* there, singing impure songs, saying : "To-day is a great day ! There is no taboo any more ! If you prohibit anything, it will be an insult to the rain ; it will not fall." The smoke of all that they have burnt constitutes a religious offering : now the country will be pure and the rain will fall. The conception prevailing among the Malulekes is somewhat different from that of the Rongas.

(1) I have published an account of the Venda traditions connected with Luvimbi or Raluvimbi in *The S. A Journal of Science*, April 1921, where more details will be found concerning this personage.

771 and only troubles those who have killed, rendering them, as is generally
774 believed, insane. — The nuru belief seems to be a compromise between
828 Animism and Dynamism. (See p. 77-80.)

5. There are in plants, animals, stones, hidden virtues which can be
789 either useful or harmful to man. Medicine-men (tinanga) possess a more or less esoteric knowledge of such, and magicians (bangoma), endowed with special powers, can acquire a control over these virtues and use them in medical art, or in magic. — This is true Dynamism.

6. Certain natural objects, such as the sea, the bush fire, are sometimes vaguely personified. — This is Animatism.

772 7. But above them all is Heaven, Tilo, which is sometimes looked on as a real being, sometimes as an impersonal power, a number of mysterious superstitions finding their explanation in this strange and perhaps obsolete notion of Heaven. — This is more than Animatism and seems to be a vague theistic, even monotheistic, idea.

771 The essential difference between Animism and Dynamism seems to
774 me clear. But it is by no means absolute. We shall often meet with rites which belong to both domains, or bear an intermediate character. In the following chapters the exact nature and influence of these various kinds of spirits and impersonal forces will be studied, and I hope that an explanation of all the facts concerning them will throw more light on the subject and show that, at any rate, Thonga Animism is very different from the Animism of the Dutch East Indies, for instance, where men speak of thousands of spirits of the earth, air, water, mountains and trees ; very different also from the fetichism met with in other Bantu tribes of Central and Western Africa.

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82 Before leaving this chapter, in which I have tried to sketch what I have
789 called by the rather pretentious term of The Natural Philosophy of the Bantus, and as a preparation for the explanation of the religious and dynamistic rites described in the following chapters, I think it advisable to set forth the principles which seem to underlie most of these rites, and which may be called the *axioms of primitive mentality*.

As regards what are commonly called *magic rites* I contend that they are in no sense purely arbitrary but that they rest on certain definite principles. These axioms of primitive mentality are what anthropologists fittingly call collective representations, viz., everybody believes

little, connection with the moral conduct of the individual. It has no moral prescriptions except those which insure the observance of the hierarchical order in the family. It neither promises reward nor threatens punishment after death. 771

Consequently it is purely *eudemonistic*, the religious ceremonies having as their sole aim material benefits connected with the terrestrial life, e. g. abundance, health, peace, and good sleep!

It is *unphilosophical*, that is to say, it does not attempt to answer the great problems about the origin and purpose of the world and human existence. These questions of causality and finality are absolutely beyond its horizon.

It is essentially *ritualistic*, and leaves very little place for true religious feeling. Adoration is practically non-existent. However, elements of *personal religion* are not altogether wanting. Some expressions in the liturgical prayers reveal humility and trust, e. g. "Death doth not come to the man who is prayed for, but only to the one who trusts in his own strength" (p. 393); thankfulness for escape from danger is sometimes expressed in a spontaneous and genuine way; and may not also the sacrifice of bitterness (p. 391) be actuated by a real and touching feeling of dependency; the old formula of invocation and the sacramental word *tsu*, now inexplicable, seem to show that there was, even in former times, such a thing as *self dedication*, and some aspiration towards a real communion between the worshipper and his gods. (See Appendix III on Personal Religion amongst Thongas.)

Animism is generally spoken of as a *religion of fear*. Applied to Thonga ancestrolatry, this statement would be an exaggeration. There is indeed no deep love for the ancestor-gods in the hearts of the Thongas; how could it be so when these "psikwembu" are so jealous, and show so little love themselves? But there is no perpetual fear. The attitude is rather that of *indifference*. Natives ask for one thing only: that they may live in peace, and that their gods may interfere with them as little as possible.

## B. THE CONCEPTION OF HEAVEN.

When studying the classic tragedies of Greece, and more especially those of Aeschylus and Sophocles, one is led to the conclusion that the gods of Olympus, in whom may be recognised, more or less distinctly, the personification of the forces of Nature, 771 772

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or heroes glorified by apotheosis, were not the only beings in whom that intellectually gifted people believed, nor the sole objects of their veneration. Higher than Olympus, and dwelling in the more remote heavens, a mysterious divinity looks down upon mankind, a divinity wiser and nobler than the capricious Zeus, or the voluptuous Artemis ; sometimes this being is called Nemesis, the avenger, inexorable fate, and sometimes it is a god more human and more moral in character. But this Supreme Being is vaguely conceived, and its form is, as it were, closely veiled, In the religion of the Thongas we meet with a similar phenomenon. Above the gods whom the common people know, worship, and call by name, there exists a power which to the majority remains ill-defined and which they express by the word *Heaven* (Tilo). This word *Tilo*, which, in the ordinary language, is used to designate the blue sky (p. 304), contains a far deeper and more comprehensive meaning. I shall not attempt to throw complete light on these ideas, which are so dim in the Native mind. But the reader who studies carefully the facts and customs which I am just about to describe, will certainly be convinced that there really exist two parallel series of religious ideas in the Thonga Religion. We have already dealt with those which first manifest themselves to the observer. Let us now consider the others ; they are not less interesting, nor less picturesque ; they are indeed perhaps deeper than those of the ordinary Ancestrolatry. This belief is in such an embryonic state that it very easily escapes observation. As already pointed out, it is a vein, a reef of gold, which has been discovered through some fortuitous circumstance, and must be worked with great care.

## I. *The definition of Heaven.*

*Tilo* is a grand word ; it comes from the same root as *Zulu*, the honoured name of a great and powerful tribe.

"Before you came to teach us that there is an All-Good Being, a Father in Heaven, we already knew there was a Heaven, but did not know there was anyone in it." Such was the declaration

of one of the most intelligent women of our congregation at Lourenço Marques, who was also the best acquainted with all the ancient Ba-Ronga customs. Timotheo Mandlati said to me, on the other hand : "Our fathers all believed that life existed in Heaven" (butomi byi kone tilwen). It is quite certain that, according to the ideas of the Thongas, as well as to those of many other tribes, Heaven was a *place* ; a place much to be desired, where was to be found that which is so seldom met with on earth, namely rest. Hence a song, which is to be found in a very similar form amongst the Zulus (1), and even amongst the Ba-Sutho, and runs thus :

(Solo) Bukali bya ngoti !
(Tutti) Nha ndji yahliya ngoti, ndji ya Tilwen !
Ndji ya kuma ku wisa !
(Solo) What a rare thing is string !
(Tutti) Oh ! how I should love to plait a string, and go up to Heaven, I would go there to find rest !

An old refrain which has come down through the ages, and has in no wise been inspired by the Christian religion : it is pure, authentic Bantu! Thus the warriors, when threatening their adversaries, and hurling defiance from one troop to another, say : "Make ready your string, and climb up to Heaven, there is no place for you here below. Here you will find nothing but misfortune" (I. p. 472) (2).

Thongas, however, never declare as a belief that men go to Heaven after death. They become "psikwembu," and we have already seen where their abode is. Nevertheless Viguet told me the story of a Hlengwe, whom he knew in times long gone by, in the Bilen country, who used to address the people in mysterious tones as follows :

(1) "Who could make a cord, whereby to go to Heaven ?" Such is the Zulu version given by Callaway.

(2) When a bone-thrower has decided that his consultant must make an offering, he often tells him, looking towards heaven : "Go, make the offering and say : It is good if I overcome the people who are below by the country which is afar." The people who are below are the wizards. The country which is afar is heaven. Another version is as follows : "It is good if I overcome the people who are below and reach the country which is far away." In the first case Heaven is considered as possessing a power greater than that of wizards ; in the second it means evidently the place of rest.

Though you eat plenty of fat and of honey, and drink plenty of beer, the day will come when you will say "Huku-huku" (fall on your back, i. e. die); people will say "Woo" (i. e. mourn you), and ask you: "Where are you going?" Then answer: "I am going to Ngundju-ya-mapsele, the Source-of-Grace, to the place where the oxen are herded by vultures (because there is no hatred and no death there), where the mosquito is killed with a stick (because everything is so flourishing and big there), where the fowl dies from fat (because there is no disease nor dearth in that blessed land) — to Heaven!" 772

This Hlengwe had either heard these words in his home or had invented them himself.

But Tilo is something more than a place. It is a *power* which acts and manifests itself in various ways. It is sometimes called *Hosi*, Lord. But this power is generally regarded as something entirely impersonal. Thongas appear to think that Heaven regulates and presides over certain great cosmic phenomena to which men must, willingly or unwillingly, submit, more especially those of a sudden and unexpected nature, by which I mean above all rain, storms, and, in human affairs, death, convulsions and the birth of twins. From this idea spring certain very characteristic customs, which I shall proceed to describe briefly.

It is Heaven that afflicts children with those terrible and mysterious *convulsions*, which carry them off without their having been really ill, in a manner of speaking... "He is ill from Heaven" — "A ni Tilo," said an old Native doctor to me in a low tone, referring to a case of this description. So Heaven is the great nombo (infantile disease), (I. p. 48), whilst diarrhea is the small nombo. [753]

But more than this, *it is Heaven which kills and makes live.* Hence the frequent expression: "Heaven loved him," when someone has escaped some deadly danger, or is particularly prosperous, and "Heaven hated him," when he has been very unfortunate, or has died.

The same idea is expressed in the following dirge. 772 539

Wa hi kanganyisa, Tshabane!
Hi yingeli Tilo, dji ku dja buya nininini!
Hi kumi babanuna babiri, ba famba ba hlahluba Tilo.
Wa nga yingela pea bambe, u ta yingela ni pea ku!

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You deceive us, Tshabane!
We have heard Heaven thunder... The roaring will soon come.
We have seen two men who were going to throw the bones with reference to Heaven...
Doubtless you have heard tell of the misfortunes of others:
You will hear them talking of your own!

Enigmatic words, but, with the help of the Natives, I have unravelled their meaning : — You are deceiving us, Tshabane, you who are trying to reassure us. We have heard Heaven. A storm has burst, there was a sudden downpour, a flash of lightning ; Heaven has struck! It has killed some one. Two men passed by, terrified ; they went to consult the Lones, to try and find means to ward off these strokes of Heaven. Useless! If you have seen the sorrow of those who mourn, do not imagine that you will escape. It will soon be your turn!

Another song which contains a similar allusion to Heaven as the power which kills, has already been quoted when describing the customs of widowhood (I. p. 207). "What shall we say to thee! King!"

The tale of "the Road to Heaven" (See *Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Ronga*, p. 237) is also very significant in this respect. It tells the story of a young girl, who, having broken her jar, and fearing a scolding from her mother, *climbs up her string* and goes to Heaven. (Always the same idea of shelter from all evils.) (1) There she finds a village ; a child is given to her, because she is so gentle and obedient. Her sister tries to do the same thing. But she is ill-tempered and wicked. Heaven explodes (baleka), kills her (by lightning), and her bones are blown right to her parents' house. In the tale of the Adventures of Bonawasi (Ch. & C. p. 295) Heaven intervenes to endow a young Native with peculiar wisdom, by means of which he gets the better of the Governor of the town. Possibly some idea of the God of the Europeans may have found its way into the composition of this tale, in which may be recognized certain traces of foreign influence. But this is assuredly not the

171 (1) The mention of this string is perhaps due to a tradition common in other African tribes. According to the Ba-Rotse, Leza, God, who dwelt on earth, ascended to Heaven one day by a spider's web. Several human beings tried to climb up the same way, but fell and failed in the attempt. (Comp. A. Jalla, *Foi et Vie*, Oct. 1910.)

case in respect to the story of Nwahungukuri, which I have published in *Les Ba-Ronga*, p. 312, and in which Heaven is credited with the full knowledge of a hidden crime committed by a murderer. This idea is so far from being an innovation due to European influence that thoughtful Natives all agree that, in former times, it was more usual to attribute death to the power of Heaven. It was a common saying that "Heaven has fallen (ku we Tilo) on such and such a village." Nowadays it is rather the gods, or the wizards, who are believed to cause death.

But this belief in Heaven has not only inspired these sayings, songs, and tales ; it has also given rise to curious customs, a description of which will throw more light on this conception of the Thongas. Their existence proves that we are not here dealing with the "animatic" invention of some person gifted with a vivid imagination (p. 366), but with a true tribal belief.

## II. *Customs Connected with the Conception of Heaven.*

### 1) Heaven, Twins and Rain.

This power, which causes lightning and death, also presides, in a very special way, at the *birth of twins*, so much so that the mother is called by the name of "Tilo," — "Heaven," — and the children "Bana ba Tilo," — "Children of Heaven" (1). Now the arrival of two or three babies at the same time is looked upon by the Thongas as a great misfortune, a defilement in respect of which very special rites must be performed. I give the details of these rites as practised in the Zihlahla, Nondwane, and Nkuna clans, as they were described to me by Tobane, Mboza, Mankhelu, etc.

Twins (hahla, or bandjwa, dji-ma) are now both allowed to live. But in former times, one of them, the one which appeared to be the feebler, was always put to death, being left to die of

(1) In our school at Lourenço Marques there was a charming young girl, who was named Nwana-wa-Tilo, Daughter of Heaven, because she had a twin brother.

Special precautions are taken in respect to twins when they pay a mourning visit. One of the grave-diggers meets them at the entrance of the village and says : "Do not fear, Children of Heaven." He then puts some ashes on their heads and on their fontanelles. This is done because twins are feeble (ma ni bushapu) and the defilement might affect them more than other children. They must therefore be protected by smearing the middle of the head, and the "extremity of the tree of life," viz., the fontanelle, with a preventive. The mother also undergoes a similar treatment. She must prostrate herself near the hut of the deceased, at the place where the wall has been pierced to make an exit for the corpse. Then the grave-digger brings some live embers in a broken pot, pours a little water on to them, and dips his fingers into the water ; he then presses both his hands against the woman's belly and brings them round her waist, pressing them all the while against the skin, until they meet on the spine ; thus she is "cured inside" (dahiwa ndjen). This will prevent her from suffering from internal troubles, to which she, having given birth to Tilo, Heaven, is particularly liable. (Comp. I. p. 151) (1).

From this brief description of the customs connected with twins in most of the Thonga clans, it may be seen that their explanation is twofold : 1) The birth of twins is a death, consequently a defilement, indeed the worst of all defilements. Hence the *purificatory rites* which bear the character of *passage rites* : the mother is secluded and passes through a period of isolation, after which she is again admitted to society after a painful "casting away of her misfortune." 2) But the cause of the defilement is not an ordinary death, but Heaven. *She is Heaven* ; she is said to have

(1) Another category of persons bearing a special relation to Heaven are the *albinos*. Cases of albinism are not frequent amongst South African Natives, yet they are sometimes met with. They are called in Thonga *Khalandlati*, a word which means literally *charcoal-lightning*. It is believed that they have been burnt (hisa) by lightning in their mother's womb before their birth. "Ba tlalile, a ba wupfanga, ba bengiwi hi tilo," viz. "they are uncomplete beings, they are not ripe, they have been hated by Heaven" ; these are the terms in which they are described. They are not however regarded as taboo (yila), they merely inspire disgust (nyenya) (p. 83). As regards women suffering from this kind of disgrace, other women do not smear themselves with the same ochre as they, lest they should give birth to albinos ; they do not drink from the same cup. Men do not marry them, and in this respect they are classed with leper women and witches, who are also looked on as repugnant.

845 *made Heaven* (a hambi Tilo), to have *carried Heaven* (a rwi Tilo), to
772 have *ascended to Heaven* (a khandjiyi Tilo). This connection
established between her and Heaven is clearly seen in the *rain*
789 *customs* previously described. Notice that the day following the
766 birth of twins is a *shimusi*, i. e. a day of rest. Nobody tills the ground, fearing that it would prevent rain from falling. When the *mbelele* takes place in Nondwane and Zihlahlà (p. 318), the half naked women who are sent to clean the wells take with them a mother of twins. This is no doubt in order to show them where the graves of twins are. But there is also another reason. In the sacred wood of Libombo there is a hole into which the woman is put ; her sisters then pour on to her the water which they have drawn from all the wells, till the hole is half full, and the water comes up to her breasts. This will cause the rain to fall. Why is this? No doubt because, the woman of Heaven being wet, Heaven itself will be wet. Spoon did not give this explanation himself, but, when I suggested it to him, he accepted it readily. For the same reason the graves of twins are watered. In certain cases water is poured on the graves of the ancestors also, because rain is attributed both to them and to Heaven, and this watering the graves is meant to induce either Heaven or the ancestor-gods to cause rain to fall. Hence again the precaution taken of burying twins in damp places, and of exhuming them in times of drought if they have been buried in dry ground (1).

845 The connection between twins and Heaven, so clearly to
772 be seen in these customs, appears again in respect to thunder-
821 storms, which, as we shall see, are another manifestation of Heaven.
789 When lightning threatens a village, people say to a twin : "Help us! You are a Child of Heaven! You can therefore cope with Heaven (mi kota Tilo), it will hear you when you speak." So the child

845 (1) In other clans this law is extended to children prematurely born, even though they
761 are not twins, and even to children who have not had the cotton string tied round their
772 waist or who have cut their upper teeth first. On the other hand, among the Nkunas no special connection seems to be established between twins and Heaven. These differences may be explained by the fact that all these abnormal cases were ascribed to
766 Heaven in former times, and the connection has been preserved in the various clans in respect to one or the other of these categories. Note that, in the song of the widows (I. p. 207), the king Heaven appears to have caused the death of the husband ; this is another proof that Heaven was formerly considered the most frequent cause of death.

goes out of the hut and prays to Heaven in the following words: "Go away! Do not annoy us! We are afraid. Go and roar far away." When the thunderstorm has ended, the child is thanked (1). His mother can also help in the same way, for has she not ascended to Heaven? "She can speak with it, she is at it (or in it) — a li ku djone." (Spoon.)

We find in these rites a striking instance of the combination of the three forms of magic which have been explained above (p. 368). Heaven, rain, lightning, the mother of twins and the twins themselves form a connected whole. Action brought to bear on the mother of twins will therefore have its effect on Heaven; this is *communionist magic*. This action consists in pouring water over her, (not only in plunging her into a lake). According to the principle of *imitative magic*, Heaven will thus be watered and will pour rain upon the earth. The act of the twin in commanding the lightning to spare the country is a case of *verbal magic*. All this would be logical enough and the conclusions perfectly legitimate if only the premisses were true!

Customs regarding twins vary from one clan to another. While in one tribe they are put to death, in others their advent is considered an event of great happiness. This is the case in *Tembe and Maputju*, where women are said to wish for twins, and, if certain mothers have enjoyed this piece of good fortune, others ask them for some of the fat with which they have smeared their bodies, hoping by the use of the same ointment to obtain a like happy result. The hut is never burnt. The mother gives birth to the twins behind the hut (fukwen, I. p. 37). When it is time for her to re-enter her domicile, a hole is made in the wall at the back. The husband is excluded from the hut till the day of presentation to the moon (a ceremony which, in these clans, is not omitted in the case of twins). When he is again admitted, his wife strikes his legs with a stick, in order "to cure him" (ku mu

(1) Mrs. Junod, who was for years a missionary amongst the Fañ or Pahouin of the French Congo, told me that, one day, after a tornado, the rainbow suddenly appeared in the sky. One of her female pupils at once ran to her, and hid her face in her schoolmistress' lap. On asking the reason of this fear the teacher was told that this girl was a twin, and twins dare not look at the rainbow. So the connection between Heaven and twins exists also in this tribe of Western Africa.

845 daha). Striking is frequently one of the rites of aggregation.
184 (See Van Gennep, *Rites de Passage*, p. 55). Let us remember that the Tembe clan is of Northern origin (I. p. 23) and has retained some customs which are different from those of the other Thongas (1).

## 2) Heaven and the "Nunu."

136 The following is a very extraordinary custom, and one which,
241 in many respects, greatly resembles those I have already described.
845 There is to be found, on the shores of Delagoa Bay, a small
772 Coleoptera belonging to the Alcides genus of the Cucurlionidæ
825 family. It has a proboscis-shaped mouth, a very hard carapace of half a centimetre in length, brown, and marked on each elytron with two longitudinal white bands. The Blacks call it the *nunu*. It is a scourge to the fields of beans and maize (much as cockchafers are with us). In December or January, when these insects begin to swarm, the chief men of the country order the diviners to throw the bones, and send the women to pick the "nunu" off the bean stalks. They gather them in "sala" shells. Then they choose (probably by casting lots) *a woman who has given birth to twins.*

(1) Amongst *the Hereros* a multiple birth is the happiest event which could possibly occur ! The Rev. E. Dannert published in the *Capetown Folklore Journal* an account of the customs practised on such occasions by the Natives of this tribe, which occupies the Western side of Southern Africa, at about the same latitude as the Thongas. The father and mother are condemned to complete silence, under penalty of bringing a curse on those who speak to them. All the members of the tribe are convened and bring their cattle with them. The twins' family has to appear before the whole assembly, and is received with lamentations. Each individual must present himself to the parents, and make them a gift of beads, or other ornaments, in return for which the father and mother purify them by means of a certain powder. After this the father has the right of going from village to village, and claiming an ox from each one, as a kind of ransom. He becomes quite a rich man. This is the *kunga rite*, which we have also met with on many occasions amongst the Thongas (I. p. 124.). How can this diversity between the customs of the Hereros and those of most of the Thongas be explained? No doubt by this vague mysterious idea of Heaven, which is behind the religious conceptions of these tribes and in which all these rites originated. This celestial power, when it manifests itself, stupefies the Natives, for it causes "a death," entails a curse. With the Thongas it is the mother and children who are the objects of this malediction, hence the purifying ceremonies imposed upon them. With the Hereros, it is the whole tribe which is affected. The family into which the twins are born has been distinguished and honoured by this heavenly visitation, and collects for itself the fines which all must pay to regain the celestial favour !

One of her daughters, who is one of the twins, is told to throw the whole "catch" of insects into the neighbouring lake. She is accompanied by a woman of mature age, and, without speaking a word, must go straight to the lake in question. Behind her marches the whole crowd of women, arms, waists and heads covered with grass, carrying branches of the big-leaved manioc, which they wave from side to side, and singing the following song, which has been composed for this occasion : 241 845 772 825

Nunu, muka! Hi da mabele!
Nunu, go away! That we may eat mealies!

The twin throws her little calabash into the water without turning round (for she is not allowed to look behind). Then the savage yells are raised louder than ever, and the women sing their impure songs (ta ku ruketela), which they would never dare to utter on ordinary occasions, and which are reserved for these ceremonies, rain seeking and "nunu" hunting.

On that day, as during the mbelele, woe to the man who walks along the paths! He is pitilessly attacked by these viragos, who push him to one side, or even maltreat him, and none of his fellows will go to his assistance. They all keep out of the way, for they well know what would be in store for them, should they meet the savage crowd! So they mostly stay quietly at home in their huts! 241 772 579 825

The "nunu" is not always thrown into the water. Sometimes, to get rid of the plague, or rather to conjure it away, they start out in a band, armed with sticks, to throw these destructive insects on to neighbouring lands. It would seem that the men are mixed up in these underhand tricks, for it is said that this way of handing over the "nunu" to neighbours, often leads to pitched battles, in which sticks are wielded to some purpose, and blows rain thick and heavy! The people of Rikatla, citizens of Nondwane, used to make a present of their pseudo-cockchafers to the inhabitants of the district of Makunyule, belonging to the Mabota clan. But the true way of conjuring away the "nunu" is to drown them in the lake, and this custom, in common with the preceding ones, certainly has some connection with the notion of Heaven, the appearance of these pests being caused by that mysterious power, which 825 772

825 presides over all unaccountable and unavoidable phenomena of the
772 atmosphere and of the life of the fields, or of human existence.

We have seen how the two sets of religious customs play their part side by side in the rites of rain-making. A similar coincidence may be noticed here. The removal of the "nunu," a rite which originated in the conception of Heaven, corresponds to the sacrifice of the chief in the Maluleke country, who gathers his sons together to pray to his ancestor-gods for the destruction of the vermin (psidi) which eat the mealies and endanger the harvest (p. 404).

### 3) Heaven, Storms and Robbers.

772 The most characteristic manifestation of Heaven is in the
821 storm. According to the statement of the credulous Natives, after
789 the women have finished cleaning the wells, and have watered
627 the graves of twins, clouds appear, a whirlwind arises, and "Heaven begins to thunder" — "Tilo dji djuma." — I have already described Thonga ideas about thunder and the lightning bird (p. 313), and the powerful charm made from the flesh, feathers and urine of this marvellous creature! There is still another use made of this extraordinary drug. It is a powerful aid in *tracing thieves*! The magician who possesses this powder of Heaven, (Ñwagwalen of Shikhabele in the Mabota clan), when called upon to point out the thief, acts in the following way. Suppose some one finds that some valuable article has disappeared from his hut, he will say to his near relatives, to those whom he suspects of having committed the larceny : "Take care! If you don't confess, we will go to Ñwagwalen, who lives at Shikhabele!" This threat may possibly be sufficient to elicit an avowal. If not, the individual who has been wronged goes to the diviner, and asks his assistance ; the latter takes his "bag of tricks," his drugs, and his big black stick, i. e., the stick which he was carrying when he dug in the earth and found the urine of the bird, or the bird itself. A notch has been made in the stick, to show the depth of the hole in which he has discovered Heaven. Carrying these charms, he goes to find the chief. An audience being granted, he cries aloud : "O Chief! a theft has been

committed! Now, no one ought ever to rob me. What shall I do!" Then the Chief assembles his subjects and invites the guilty one to confess. If all deny it, Ñwagwalen starts off, with all his apparatus, for the place where the theft was committed, and "treats it medicinally" (a dahela mbangu). He spreads out his drugs, raises his stick in the air, and addresses Heaven as follows : 772 821 789 627

> We, Tilo, hi wene u ka ni mahlu, u bonaka busiku ni nhlekanhi!
> Ba tekile psa nga ba kaneta! Tana u ba komba ba psha!
> Oh Heaven, thou it is who hast eyes which see as well by night as by day...
> They have stolen my goods, and they deny it! Come and discover them; may they be consumed!

Then the clouds begin to gather, and, towards evening, the storm breaks. Lightning strikes the thief in his hut, and causes the stolen articles to reappear. — "I saw this happen at Hoñwana," declared Spoon, "but of late years such occurrences have been less frequent."

According to Camilla, the guilty person is sometimes punished by a terrible attack of vermin, of which he is unable to rid himself ; or he is confronted with several palm leaves, which, by a kind of supernatural judgment, turn into snakes, if he be truly guilty of having stolen the missing property.

The intervention of Heaven in the matter of detecting thieves is also an accepted fact in Khosen. My colleague, the Rev. A. Grandjean, told me of the following significant custom. When there is a storm, those who have missed any belongings go and stand at the door of the hut of the suspected thief, and it is quite possible that the inmate, terrified by the thunder, may throw out the stolen articles.

It may be concluded, from these perfectly authenticated customs, that the Natives attribute to Heaven the power of *omniscience*, more especially in respect to the detection of theft. The basket of bones is never consulted for this purpose. Moreover as Heaven guarantees property and makes people afraid to steal, it acts as a kind of *moralising influence*. [626]

I have also been told by witnesses from the Nkuna region that into the composition of the charm used to protect gardens against thieves, (p. 30) there enters a little powder obtained by burning a 789 772

789 stem which has been struck by lightning, i. e. by Heaven ; or the
772 magician will burn branches of the same tree in the garden itself and bring them near to the stalks in order that these may be surrounded by the smoke emanating from them. If a thief enters the garden with evil intentions, "Tilo dji ta mu dlaya, i. e. Heaven will kill him."

### 4) Heaven and the Balungwana.

772 In 1894, as previously stated, locusts, which had not been
825 seen for some fifty years, made their appearance on the shores of
776 Delagoa Bay, and also in Natal and the Transvaal. The popular imagination was, naturally, greatly stirred by this unusual phenomenon, which was at first greeted with smiles and astonishment, but which, later on, was the cause of endless lamentation. I was one day walking up the hill of Lourenço Marques with an old man, the counsellor of one of the sub-chiefs of Tembe, a thoughtful and intelligent person, when he said to me, with great earnestness, in a low voice, as if referring to some important event : "Have you not heard that in Maputju two dwarfs (psimhu-ñwanyana) fell from Heaven ; a little man and a little woman. They came to say to the people : "Do not kill the grasshoppers! They belong to us!" This counsellor only repeated what all thought and were saying in all the native villages ; these grasshoppers, arriving unexpectedly from on high, were a manifestation of Heaven, just like the lightning, rain, twins, or the nunu, and these celestial beings had come to announce it to men.

772 But belief in the existence of *special personages* in Heaven
776 did not originate in connection with these terribly destructive
821 insects. The idea had been familiar, for a long time past, to the Rongas, and probably to all the Thongas. These personages were not only described as dwarfs, but also as balungwana (p. 352). They were said to fall from Heaven at the time of the great rains. Thus, Timoteo Mandlati told me people had seen some of them appear, a long time ago, in the Nkuna country, and that they had gone back to heaven in a cloud ; they live in celestial space, and when it thunders without any rain falling, the Nkunas say :

2: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga



"Balungwana ba tlanga henhla" — "The balungwana are at play up there." Or it is they who are singing in heaven when there is a prolonged roar of thunder, saying : "wuwu-wuwu!" 772 776 921

When some one passes along the road, they dispute up above as to who he may be. One says : "It is so and so," and the others contradict him. Then they spit on the traveller, who is quite astonished to see some saliva on his hand. He mistakes it for rain, and looks up to the sky to see where the rain is coming from. The balungwana then have a chance to see his face, and the one who has guessed rightly says to the others : "You see! I was right."

In Bilen I heard of a man who prevented children from picking the beautiful red flowers of Tecoma capensis, telling them that the balungwana wanted them for dresses. The same individual believed that these little men would bring oxen to him. 772 776

The Rongas say that a little man fell on the hill of Lourenço Marques, near the house of Sithifi, the son of Mashaken, just before the famous war between Mozila and Mawewe (I. p. 28), the rival claimants to the kingdom of Gaza, and that this dwarf came as a presage of the troubles which were to follow. "Lots of folk saw him" said Charlie in 1895 ; (he was then a man of some forty years of age). "We were too young to be allowed to look at him ; the Whites took him and carried him off to Mozambique." — Heaven is therefore inhabited. This is generally admitted, but the idea, from all that one can gather, remains very vague.

## C. CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THONGA RELIGION.

### 1. *The Origin of the Conception of Heaven.*

Ancestrolatry forms a clear, well-defined religion, with its theology (i. e., the ideas as regards the psikwembu), its sacrifices, and its prayers. The dim, mysterious ideas about Heaven, incorporated in or rather lying behind some of the most extraordinary rites of the tribe, bear a very different character. There is something incoherent, vague and 771 772 776 171

771 unexpected in them, and it would seem that, bearing as they do an
772 essentially deistic character, and accompanied by no true worship, they
776 might as well be absent from the horizon of the Thonga mind.

171 However, when we study other Bantu tribes, we come to exactly the opposite conclusion, i. e., that it would be indeed strange if no religious ideas of this kind were found amongst our tribe. In fact, this occurrence of a double set of religious ideas is universal amongst Bantus. They all believe in a kind of Supreme Being, an All-Father, who bears many different names, *Nzame* amongst the Fan and a great number of West African tribes, *Nyambe* amongst the Ba-Rotsi, *Leza* in some Zambezi and Rhodesian districts, *Mulungu* amongst fifteen East African tribes (1), *Unkulunkulu* in Zululand, *Nungungulu* round Inhambane, and *Mudimo* amongst the Ba-Sutho, etc., etc. The Thonga *Tilo* is, most likely, one of these names. The word probably comes from the root *ulu*, high, elevated, and *ilu*, heaven, which the Rev. P. Sacleux has found with that meaning amongst Central or West African tribes. (*Mulu*, amongst the Bembas ; *Liulu*, in Kimbundu ; *Diulu*, in Luba ; *Wilu*, in Luyi ; *Egulu* in Ganda ; *Idjulu*, amongst the Tongas of Zambezi, etc.). This root, with the personal prefix, has given birth to the term *Mugulu*, designating God in Tabwa and *Mukuru* in Herero. It may be that Mukuru is rather related to the *Unkulunkulu* of the Zulus, the Great One. (See Mgr. Le Roy, "La Religion des Primitifs," 1909, p. 498.)

In the South African tribes, however, the conception of the Supreme Being is not nearly so precise as in most parts of Central Africa. The Thonga Tilo, although sometimes invoked, is hardly a being, but seems rather to be a personification of Nature. Is this the original conception of the Supreme Being, or is it rather a transformation of this? I abstained, in *Les Ba-Ronga*, from expressing any definite opin[illegible] this point. Further study has now led me to believe that [illegible]tter conclusion is the more probable, and that ideas concerning Heaven were more definite in former times. This, at any rate, is also the conviction of intelligent elderly Natives, who are able to remember the former ideas held by the tribe. They say : "As regards death, people now commonly affirm that it is caused by witchcraft, whilst formerly they attributed it to the agency of Heaven." Let us also notice the name of the dwarfs who are believed to inhabit Heaven, the *balungwana*. This word is a

(1) Comp. J. Torrend's *Comparative Grammar of the S. A. Bantu Languages*, p. 68.

diminutive of *Mulungu*, *balungu*, by which are designated, amongst the Zulus and Thongas, White people of every description, whether Europeans or Asiatics. Could the inhabitants of Heaven have been called "balungwana," on account of their resemblance to the Whites? It would hardly seem probable, for the name of the balungwana, and the ideas connected with them, were in existence long before White people were generally known, or had settled in the country. It is much more reasonable to suppose that the name of these mythical beings, as also that by which the Whites are designated, is a derivative of some other pre-existent term ; and what should this be if not the famous vocable "Mulungu," which stands for God, the One Supreme God, in so many of the Bantu dialects of East Africa, from Lake Victoria Nyanza to the Zambesi, to Senna and Quilimane? I should be inclined to think that the tribes in the neighbourhood of Delagoa were also acquainted with this name, which is so widely known, and that it has, in the course of centuries, disappeared from their theology, only leaving, as a last trace, the term balungwana, applied to the heavenly beings who occasionally descend to earth, and balungu, designating that superior race whose wisdom has always impressed the Blacks as supernatural. If this hypothesis were confirmed, we should have the right to conclude that the idea of Heaven, such as it is described in this chapter, is the disfigured remnant of a higher and monotheistic conception, held by the primitive Bantus before their dispersion, which has evolved in various ways amongst the different tribes.

## II. *The Antiquity of Ancestrolatry.*

Ancestor Worship seems, on the other hand, to be an extremely ancient religion amongst mankind. There have been discovered of late years sepulchres of prehistoric date, which seem to show that the funeral rites of the first races were very similar to those practised by the Bantus of the present day. In comparing the burial of Sokis (I. p. 139) with that of a human being of the Mousterian age, whose remains were recently discovered by Hauser in the celebrated "Abri du Moustier" (Dordogne) (1) I noticed the following resemblances :

(1) See my paper "Deux enterrements à 20,000 ans de distance." *Anthropos*, 1908, I. v. Comp. also *L'homme préhistorique*. January, 1909.

171 769 1) In both cases, the corpse was treated with great, even affectionate care, protected against the earth, and provided with a pillow.

2) The legs and arms had been bent towards the body, a custom widespread amongst primitive races, and directly due to the belief in an after-life.

3) The deceased is regarded as sleeping : hence the pillow provided for him.

4) His after-life is believed to be an exact continuation of his existence on earth. Hence the fact that the articles which he was accustomed to use are put on to, or inside, his grave, the mats, rugs, mug in one case, and silex or "coups de poing" in the other.

5) If the rites performed for Sokis may be explained by the hypothesis that he has become a *shikwembu*, a god endowed with divine powers, if they are in truth acts of worship, it is but reasonable to suppose that the same religious conceptions gave birth to the similar rites of the Mousterian Primitives. The Mousterian Age is one of the first periods of the Quaternary. Some palaeontologists believe it to be anterior to the last glacial period, and think that the dwellers in la Dordogne lived 20,000, even 50,000 years ago! They possessed, then, a religion, and this religion was probably Ancestrolatry.

## III. *The Relation between Ancestrolatry and the Conception of Heaven.*

769 772 776 The conclusion which may be drawn from the two preceding paragraphs is that both Ancestor Worship and the Conception of a Supreme Being are of very ancient date, and the question naturally arises as to which is the older. I do not pretend here to be able to supply a solution to this great problem, but merely to draw the attention of my readers to the following facts.

1) When questioned as to the relative antiquity of their two sets of religious ideas, Thongas reply that they are unable to give an answer. Their conception of Heaven is so impersonal that they cannot draw any comparison between the two. Their neighbours, the Swazis and the Zulus, however, are very decided upon this point. The Rev. W. Challis, in *The East and the West* of July, 1908, summarises their statements as follows :

"Long ago a great and noble Bantu king was in the habit of climbing a twin-peaked mountain at daybreak, there to intercede with the Great Great One (Unkulunkulu) on behalf of his people. His son, who succeeded him, was afraid to draw near to the Great God whom his father worshipped, so he called upon the spirit of his father to intercede for him and his people before the Creator of all. Gradually each head of a house adopted this method of approaching God, until each family had its own ancestral spirits as mediators first, then merely as beings who brought good or bad luck, and who needed to be propitiated by sacrifice and constant flattery and attention. But God is not in their thoughts now ; only a vague tradition among the old men survives as to the existence of the Great Great One." 769 772 776

The Zulus affirm, so Callaway says, that the same proceeding took place amongst their ancestors. This seems to be a phenomenon similar to the adoration of saints in medieval times, after a period when religion had had a much purer and more transcendental character.

2) A second fact, which points in the same direction, is the contrast which exists in the conception of the ancestral spirits. On the one hand they are but men, who may be insulted (as was often the case with the saints to whom reference has just been made ; take, for instance, the incident of the striking of the image of St Antony of Padua by a worshipper, because the saint had not helped him to recover some lost property) ; on the other hand they are endowed with the qualities of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence in their relations with their descendants. It would seem as if the idea of divinity, which was not originally connected with the spirits of the departed, had been applied to them in an awkward and merely external fashion.

3) It is wonderful to notice how easily the idea of the Christian God is accepted by the Bantus. They have scarcely any difficulty in believing that this is the real God to whom worship is due. Livingstone long ago remarked this, and the truth of it has been confirmed by Miss Kingsley, for one, in regard to the Northern Bantus, and also by most of those who have endeavoured to win over these tribes to Christianity. It seems as if one were telling them an old story, with which they had been quite familiar but had now half forgotten. In regard to the Thongas I believe the psychological process to be as follows. When they hear of the *Shikwembu*, who is *in Heaven*, there at once takes place in their minds a coalescence, or reunion of the two main characteristics of their two religions ; — their *shikwembu* is personal but not transcendental ; their *Heaven* is transcendental but not personal.

769 God, the real God who is preached to them, is both personal and
772 transcendental ; it is as if two different kinds of electricity suddenly
776 came in contact with each other in their minds and produced a flash of light... The result is decisive. The two ideas can no longer be kept apart. When the Native has adopted the living God of Christianity, he either understands Him more and more fully, and is able to find great joy and satisfaction of soul in his new religion, or he abandons Him, and becomes godless, if he is unwilling to accept the morality of a true Christian life ; he very seldom returns to Ancestrolatry, nor to his former deistic and naturalistic conceptions. This is another proof that the knowledge of the one and only God, who reigns over all, was indeed sleeping in his heart and conscience, no doubt as a result of the ancient monotheistic conceptions of the Bantus.

The evolution of mankind has been a long one! Even if the Bantus formerly had the idea of God, this would not go to prove anything as regards the primitive religion of humanity. This question is entirely beyond the range of the present work, and even Science may perhaps never be able to answer it. I can therefore leave it out of consideration.

My last observation has shown the caducity of the Thonga religion. It is not able to stand before the advance of the higher revealed religions, Mohammedanism and Christianity. Hence the facility with which Thongas are converted to one or other of these beliefs. This fact is of considerable importance in respect to the future of the tribe, and it will be necessary for us to consider it in our Conclusion.

(See also *Some additional remarks on the idea of the Supreme Being and on Ancestor-worship in relation to Religious History*. App. IV.)